



Appropriations Committee Testimony

February 20, 2013

Good evening Senator Harp, Representative Walker and distinguished members of the Appropriations Committee.

My name is Dan Bolognani, manager of the Interlaken Inn in Lakeville, CT. I am speaking here tonight on behalf of all tourism-related business – big and small, and in support of all CT communities – big and small, because tourism isn't just about an innkeeper making a living – it's about the economic lifeblood that tourism brings to our entire community.

Lodging, dining and attractions are just the tip of the iceberg when it comes to measuring the impact of tourism. Our employees, our vendors and our contractors are all counting on us to keep a steady stream of visitors flowing into town – so if our business suffers, so goes countless others who rely on us.

I am highly concerned that there is legislation pending that would de-fund (**H.B. 6350**) and eliminate our regional tourism bureaus (**H.B. 6354**). I urge you reject these ideas and to consider the extreme value of the work that these bureaus perform, and the high rate of return that Connecticut receives whenever we invest in effective tourism marketing. (The State of CT commissioned a study that revealed funding for local tourism is an investment that returns roughly seven dollars (\$7) for every one dollar (\$1) invested).

For over 30 years our regional bureau has provided the Interlaken with the ability to compete in a very aggressive marketplace, to grow our business by providing marketing and advertising opportunities, and to add employees as we attract more customers.

I understand that we need statewide marketing campaigns, and the advertising and promotion that can only be coordinated at the state level...

However – it's my regional bureau that understands my business, knows me personally, sees the local and regional opportunities that exist, and can coordinate dozens of our small businesses in a unified marketing effort. I am just not confident that this task can (or will) be done effectively by any other agency or institution at the state level.

Though we're a small business, I credit my regional tourism bureau with helping the Interlaken Inn to -

Interlaken Inn

74 Interlaken Road | Lakeville, CT 06039 | InterlakenInn.com

- Collect and remit well over a half-million dollars in sales and lodging tax annually
- Employ up to 100 people during the height of our season
- Provide a hub of economic activity for our community, as we encourage our guests to visit other local businesses

I believe that the economic vitality of Salisbury – Lakeville (and likely many other communities throughout CT) is tied to the influx of visitors and the spending that they bring.

For instance, Interlaken Inn will support our community by:

- Purchasing local goods to supply the restaurant and hotel
- Using other local companies and contractors to provide services such as carpet cleaning, painting, landscapers, florists, etc.

If regional tourism is eliminated I truly believe that it will create major obstacles for the Interlaken in the years ahead. We've been fortunate to have an effective system in place for decades, as they:

- Understand the local and regional marketing messages that appeal to consumers
- Know the individual small and large tourism-related businesses, and represent them all fairly
- Are familiar with our communities, and create marketing opportunities for places that most people have never heard of!
- Coordinate marketing for hundreds of small- and medium-sized businesses that allow us to compete in the marketplace

I believe that the regional tourism bureaus are critical to the long-term health of our business. I urge you to support them by supporting their continued, sustainable funding.

Tourism is an industry that is critical every part of the state, and provides economic benefits that extend throughout our communities.

Please preserve tourism region funding and reject the removal of the tourism regions from the statutes.

Respectfully submitted, February 20, 2013



Dan Bolognani
Interlaken Inn

Interlaken Inn

74 Interlaken Road | Lakeville, CT 06039 | InterlakenInn.com